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From: David Lipman <lipman@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>  
X-Sender: lipman@void  
To: Harold\_Varmus@nih.gov  
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Harold,  
Thanks for spending the time to discuss the issues - I've had a chance to think a bit more about your general idea and I can see some merits to it.

Essentially, your model is that NIH does not itself initiate any new journals. Rather, NIH would provide a system whereby independent journals could utilize an NIH supported repository to provide access to an electronic version of their journal. These journals could use an NIH-developed system for receiving authors' submissions of articles and supplementary data - the articles would then be reviewed under the auspices of the journal, and then released for publication electronically by the NIH system. Conceivably, an independent journal may simply provide to the NIH system versions of their articles for electronic access and linkage to the rest of the repository, while still retaining their independent identity (e.g. home page, table of contents, etc.).

In many cases, the assistance from NIH's system would not really save the society much money (unless they dropped their print journals) but in some cases, NIH's system would make a significant difference. I expressed my skepticism as to what Society journals would open up their journals this way - especially if they are making money off their journals -and this remains to be seen.

One question comes to mind however: How do you decide which journals you'll work with? We talked about the society journals but there are a number of non-profit journals not associated with societies not to mention the scads of commercial journals. Clearly some of them we'd be uncomfortable with. Let's imagine however that we came up with a criterion such as that they had NIH grantees on their editorial board. Then if a publisher wanted to start a series of journals they could use this system as long as the journal handled review. And for new journals, this could indeed save money and provide an unusually high profile. In fact, an interest group such as those at NIH, could start their own journal -- so for that matter, could Pat Brown. He and his colleagues could even start one with their own rules for review etc.. One difference in the model I'm describing is that there is no "bin".

While I doubt many existing journals would take us up on our offer, there certainly could be new journals that would. Perhaps if we created some momentum, some of the existing societies would decide to work with us. So a scenario is that you compose a paper describing the needs for such a

system and the great benefits it would have for biomedical research - benefits which justify some NIH investment to assist journals in making their material openly available. And then you invite the publishing community to take you up on your offer - including commercial publishers, societies, etc.. using some simple criteria to weed out totally inappropriate journals. Pat and other enthusiasts may follow through on their model for review, etc. using this NIH system, perhaps some commercial publishers like Vitek Tracz would as well, and maybe one or two of the smaller societies or those with unprofitable journals. If there is some measure of success, then some other societies might also join. An approach like I've described would also let Pat try out his new idea for review, in competition with the existing approaches.

In any case, if you want to discuss this a bit more, I'm ready.

Regards,  
David